

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 /065 W
-----121741Z 066185 /44

P R 121645Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BERN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4332
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERN 2137

USIA FOR IOR/M

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SZ
SUBJ: SWISS OFFICIAL & MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SUMMARY: UNSURPRISINGLY, SWISS MEDIA GAVE FULL AND PROMINENT COVERAGE TO PRESIDENT'S VISIT. REPORTING REFLECTED SWISS DELIGHT THAT NEW US PRESIDENT WAS VISITING TINY SWITZERLAND. COMMENT FOCUSED ON MEETINGS, NEWS EVENTS AND ON SWISS PERCEPTION OF PRESIDENT AS MAN OF HIGHEST INTEGRITY WHOSE CREDIBILITY IS EXPECTED TO ENABLE HIM AND US TO PLAY CRUCIAL LEADERSHIP ROLE WITH ALLIES AND IN MIDDLE EAST CRISIS.

2. SWISS PUBLIC AND MEDIA WERE OBVIOUSLY DELIGHTED AND FASCINATED BY FIRST VISIT OF US PRESIDENT SINCE EISENHOWER AND WHAT THEY NOTED WAS PRESIDENT'S FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO SMALL EUROPEAN COUNTRY. MASSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE ACTUALLY BEGAN MAY 8 DURING LONDON SUMMIT WITH TV AND PRESS COMMENTING FAVORABLY ON PRESIDENT'S INFORMAL, WINNING STYLE, ADDING THAT IT MADE HIM POPULAR WITH BOTH UK PRESS AND PUBLIC. PRESS ALSO GAVE PRESIDENT GOOD MARKS
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ON ECONOMIC SUMMIT TALKS. SWISS FRENCH LANGUAGE TV CARRIED HOUR AND HALF PANEL DISCUSSION MAY 8 ON MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS, STRESSING US ROLE AS HONEST BROKER AND PRESIDENT'S IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP POSITION IN ADVANCING PARTIES TO SETTLEMENT.

3. EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF MAY 9 VISIT, PARTICULARLY BY TV, WAS SIMILAR TO US MEDIA COVERAGE OF MAJOR EVENTS, NOTABLY LIVE

BROADCASTS OF AIRPORT AND HOTEL ARRIVALS, PRESS CONFERENCE AND DEPARTURE.

EVENING MAY 9 SWISS TV CARRIED NBC FILM OF "DAY WITH PRESIDENT CARTER". SWISS FRENCH LANGUAGE TV COVERAGE AND COMMENT HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY BALANCED (NOT ALWAYS THE CASE ON US THEMES) AND POSITIVE. IN MAY 10 EVENING FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON NEWS PROGRAM "UN JOUR, UNE HEURE", ANNOUNCER APPEARED ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH VISIT WHILE SHOWING FILMS OF EXTENSIVE MEDIA AND SECURITY PREPARATIONS AND REPLAY OF VISIT HIGHLIGHTS.

4. MEDIA TOOK DELIGHT IN CONTRASTING PRESIDENT'S POSITION AS LEADER OF WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL NATION TO THAT OF LITTLE, TOURISTIC SWITZERLAND. TV COVERAGE AND COMMENT NOTED WITH SOME PRIDE AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF SWISS DEMOCRACY THAT SWISS PRESIDENT FURGLER ARRIVED AT INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL WITH LITTLE PROTOCOL AND SAT IN LOBBY UNBOTHERED (ALMOST UNNOTICED) BY CRUSH OF JOURNALISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS WHICH ASSAD AND PRESIDENT COULD NOT DO. PRESS REPORTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT PRESIDENT TOOK TIME OUT OF BUSY SCHEDULE TO MEET WITH FURGLER AND COMMENTED THAT "SUCH MEETINGS AND VISITS DO NOT HAPPEN EVERY DAY". PRESS REPORTED THAT CARTER AND FURGLER DISCUSSED CSCE BELGRADE CONFERENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS, WORLD ECONOMIC RECOVERY, NEED TO FIGHT INFLATION AND OPPOSE TRADE PROTECTIONISM, AREAS WHERE SWISS CAN PLAY POSITIVE ROLE. PRESS HOPED VISIT SHOWED PRESIDENT THAT EUROPE IS NOT LIMITED TO EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY. ALL PAPERS FEATURED POOL PHOTO OF PRESIDENT AND FURGLER MEETING.

5. WIDE COVERAGE ALSO GIVEN TO PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH ASSAD WHICH PRESS REPORTED WAS QTE INFORMATIVE
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AND FRIENDLY UNQTE. ALL PAPERS FEATURED PICTURES TAKEN AT PRESS CONFERENCE, REPORTED STATEMENTS OF EACH PRESIDENT AT LENGTH. END UNCLASSIFIED

6. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: PRIOR TO PRESIDENTS'S ARRIVAL, MANY PAPERS WERE NEGATIVE ON BRIEF TIME ALLOTTED FOR COURTESY CALL ON FURGLER. AFTERWARDS, THEY WERE UNANIMOUS IN SAYING MUCH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED, AND GAINED EVEN THOUGH TIME NECESSARILY KEPT SHORT. ENTHUSIASTIC SWISS REPORTS RECOGNIZED IMPORTANCE OF MEETING WITH ASSAD IN CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH THEIR OWN LEADER. SWISS SAW THIS LAST GESTURE NOT AS MERE PROTOCOL VISIT BUT GENUINE FEELING OF FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUALITY OF INTERESTS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. FRENCH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS QTE 24 HEURES UNQTE OF LAUSANNE FRONT-PAGED PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL STATEMENT WHICH PAID TRIBUTE TO SWITZERLAND.

7. PRIVATE REACTION OF SWISS OFFICIALS TO PRESIDENT'S

VISIT HAS BEEN VERY FAVORABLE. HIGH OFFICERS IN THE
FEDERAL POLITICAL DEPT HAVE TOLD US THAT PRESIDENT
FURGLER WAS DELIGHTED. END CONFIDENTIAL
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BERN02137
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770167-1087
Format: TEL
From: BERN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770567/aaaacfmng.tel
Line Count: 120
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Litigation History:
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Message ID: 87e8b695-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2554505
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SWISS OFFICIAL & MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENTIAL VISIT BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED
TAGS: PFOR, SZ, (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/87e8b695-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009